VIRTUAL TERM ABROAD: CONNECTING STUDENTS AND CREATING COMMUNITY USING VIRTUAL TOOLS

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POLL

Is your institution discussing or implementing actions to “internationalize” the curriculum or create more global awareness?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
SUNY AND THE WORLD

In the globalized economy, students with a broad cultural and international perspective have distinct competitive advantages. To create a globally competent student body, we must increase the opportunities for international exposure throughout all courses and degrees.

(The Power of SUNY, 2010)
ESC PARTNERS

UNAPEC – Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - since 2007
Quality Leadership University (QLU) – Panama City, Panama - since 2009
## WHY BLENDED?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panama / D.R.</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Context</td>
<td>Low Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Power Distance, discouraged from asking questions, only one right answer</td>
<td>Understanding through Participation, encourage opinions, no “right” answer</td>
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<tr>
<td>High uncertainty avoidance</td>
<td>New medium to students, lots of uncertainty</td>
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<td>English second or third language</td>
<td>Heavy reliance on reading and writing</td>
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POLL

Have you participated in a study abroad or other international experience?

☐ Yes

☐ No
POLL

What impact did that international experience have on you?

A. Transformational
B. Continues to impact my world view
C. Was a lot of fun, but then got back to the real world
D. Not much
E. Doesn’t apply/ No experience
WHY VIRTUAL TERM ABROAD?

“Only a small percentage of students participate in study abroad programs and many groups are underrepresented. There is little diversity in race, gender and ethnicity nor access for non-traditional, lower socioeconomic groups, those with disabilities and first generation college students” (Fischer, 2012).
SUNY IIT GRANT

Development, application and assessment of innovative use of instructional technology to improve student engagement and learning across disciplines

• Improve quality of learning experience
• Power of SUNY
• Shared Services
PROJECT GOALS

• Opportunity for all students to participate in a virtual term abroad
• Analyze use of virtual tools and mobile technology
• Promote cross cultural and/or international interaction
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age?

- Under 20
- 20 - 24
- 25 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 or more
Do you have....?

**High speed (cable) internet access at home**

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

**High speed (cable) internet access at work**

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

**An unlimited data plan for your phone**

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

**A modem (air card) for mobile internet access**

- Not sure
- No
- Yes
How do you consider yourself with regards to technology use?

- No experience
- Little experience: email, word processing, spreadsheets
- Fair experience: online course
- Substantial experience: web page creation, statistical software
- Extensive experience: programming languages, CAD
PANAMA/DR TOOLS

Which of the following tools have you used for course related work?

- Elluminate/Blackboard
- Collaborate
- Skype
- Google Chat
- Google Docs
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Diigo
- VoiceThread
- Facebook
- Twitter
- All Other Responses

Legend:
- Very Frequently (several times in each course)
- Somewhat frequently (in most, but not all courses)
- Occasionally (in a third to half of my courses)
- Almost never (have only used 1-2 times)
- Have never used
SAMPLE COURSE COLLABORATION

Duration 2-3 weeks

Initial asynchronous icebreaker

2-3 Virtual sessions

Asynchronous discussion in between virtual sessions

Team written assignment
COLLABORATIONS COMPLETED

Pilot: ESC Panama – SUNY/Cortland

ESC Panama – College of Westchester

http://commons.esc.edu/cowcollaboration/

ESC Panama – ESC CDL

http://sunyescimmigrationexperiment.blogspot.com/2013/02/guidelines-for-the-international.html

ESC Panama – University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia

http://habitatsk.wordpress.com/

ESC Panama (Market Research) – College of Westchester

http://commons.esc.edu/cowcollaboration2/

ESC Panama (International Finance) – College of Westchester

http://commons.esc.edu/internationalcollaboration/
FACULTY OPINION: STUDENT LEARNING

Compared to other courses I have offered, I feel students in this collaborative project:

- Demonstrated significantly more learning
- Demonstrated slightly more learning
- Learning seemed about the same
- Demonstrated less learning
- Not sure
FACULTY OPINION: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Did having virtual meetings help your students stay more engaged with their coursework compared to student engagement in courses in which you haven’t used virtual meetings.

- Yes, students were substantially more engaged with virtual meetings
- Yes, students were somewhat more engaged with virtual meetings
- I didn’t notice any difference in student engagement
- No, the students seemed slightly less engaged
- No, the students were significantly less engaged.
FACULTY OPINION: CONNECTION TO STUDENTS

Did virtual meeting tools help you feel more connected to your students during the online portion of the course compared to when you teach entirely online between residencies?
Overall, my satisfaction with this collaboration using virtual meeting tools is:
LESSONS LEARNED

• Icebreaker builds enthusiasm
• Close communication crucial
• Test the equipment in advance; have a Plan B
• Give students sufficient advance notice of schedule
• Collaboration should be required and factor into grade
• Plan virtual sessions to include student activities
• Provide more faculty training and student orientation
METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework:

Value Creation

Immediate value:
- Level of participation
- Quality of interaction
- Level of engagement
- Having fun
- Level of reflection

Potential value:
- Skills acquired
- Inspiration
- Social connections
- Tools and documents
- New views of learning

Applied value:
- Implementation of advice
- Innovation in practice
- Reuse of products
- Use of social connections
- New learning approaches

Realized value:
- Personal performance
- Organizational performance
- Organizational reputation
- New expectations

Reframing value:
- Change in strategy
- New metrics
- New expectations
- Institutional changes

**FIGURE**: WENGERT, E., B. TRAYNOR, AND M. DE LAAT. CHART FROM ASSESSING VALUE CREATION FOR COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND NETWORKS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.
RESULTS: IMMEDIATE VALUE

STUDENTS

What happened and what was your experience during the collaborative project?

- There was more participation than during other times in the course.
- The quality of the participation was better than during other times.
- The project was fun or inspiring.
- The activity and interaction were relevant to me.
- I interacted or made connections with new people.
- I made learning connections between the collaborative project and other.

FACULTY

Please rate your level of agreement on the following statements related to what happened and the student experience during the collaborative project.

- There was more participation than during other times in the course.
- The quality of the participation was better than during other times.
- The project was fun, inspiring, or convivial.
- The activity and interaction were relevant to the students.
- The students interacted or made connections with new people.
- The students made learning connections between the collaborative project and other.
- Other.
RESULTS: POTENTIAL VALUE

**STUDENTS**

How has your participation in the collaborative project changed your social relationships?

- I have gained access to new people
- I know students in the other country well enough to know what they can...
- I trust students in the other country enough to ask them for help.
- I feel less isolated.
- I am recognized for my contributions.

**FACULTY**

Please rate your level of agreement on the following statements related to how participation in the collaborative project change student social relationships.

- They gained access to new people.
- They seemed to know students in the other country well enough to know...
- They trusted students in the other country enough to ask them for help.
- They seemed to feel less isolated.
- Students recognized one another for their contributions.
- Other
RESULTS: APPLIED VALUE

STUDENTS

What access to resources has your participation in the collaborative project given you?

- I have new tools, methods or processes.
- I have access to documents or sources of information
  - Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree

FACULTY

Please rate your level of agreement on the following statements as to how participation in the collaborative project changed student access to resources:

- They have new tools, methods or processes
- They have access to documents or sources of information they would not otherwise have
  - Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
- Other
RESULTS: REALIZED VALUE

STUDENTS

How has your experience in the collaborative project changed you?

- I have acquired new skills or knowledge:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- My understanding or perspective of the other country has changed:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- I feel more inspired to participate in the course:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- I have gained confidence in my ability to engage with people from each:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

FACULTY

Please rate your level of agreement on the following statements related to how student experience in the collaborative project seem to change them.

- They acquired new skills or knowledge:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- Their understanding or perspective of the other country seemed to change:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- They seemed to feel more inspired to participate in the course:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- They seemed to gain confidence in their ability to engage with people:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- Other:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE
RESULTS: REFRAMING VALUE

STUDENTS

How has your participation in the collaborative project changed your view of learning?

FACULTY

Please rate your level of agreement on the following statements as to how participation in the collaborative project seemed to change the students’ view of learning.
RESULTS: REFRAMING VALUE

STUDENTS

Has participation in the collaborative project changed your understanding of the value of international perspectives?

FACULTY

Please rate your level of agreement on the following statements related to whether participation in the collaborative project changed student understanding of the value of international perspectives.
POLL

How much experience do you have using virtual tools (anything from Google Docs through Teleconferencing)?

A. A routine part of my work
B. Occasional user; fairly confident
C. Infrequent; still uncomfortable
D. Don’t use, but interested
E. Try to avoid them
POLL

What problems or obstacles do you perceive related to the use of virtual tools? (Mark all that apply.)

A. Technical problems like bandwidth issues
B. Not sure how to use the tools to meet course objectives
C. Student resistance
D. My institution doesn’t supply or support the tools (including training)
E. I am not interested in using them
EXPERIENCES WITH TOOLS

- Students logged in from computers, phones and tablets
- Visual, real time interaction increased engagement and focus
- If no visual, students opted for chat (even when mike enabled)
- Chat feature important
- Use the right tool for the job
- Some tools don’t work with teleconferencing equipment
- Windows 8 still doesn’t work with a lot of tools
FACULTY OPINION: TOOLS

Please rate each of the tools you used for how you feel it contributes to the students' learning experience:

- Never used
- Had a negative impact on the learning experience
- Did not hurt nor help
- Somewhat helpful
- Very helpful

Tools:
- Collaborate/Blackboard
- Skype
- Google Chat
- Google Docs
- Blogs
- Willis
- Dega
- VoiceThread
- Facebook
- Twitter
- All Other Responses
FACULTY OPINION: PROBLEMS

The biggest problems with virtual meetings were (mark all that apply):

- Not being comfortable with my ability to use the tool: 2
- Technical problems like internet connections, sound, etc.: 1
- Students had trouble attending at a set time: 1
- Student behavior or lack of participation: 1
- I wasn't sure how to effectively use the tool to advance course objectives: 1

- The schedule: 0
POSITIVE RESULTS

• Student insight and knowledge about the other country
• Students recognized a change in their view of the importance of international perspectives
• Relationships established for future collaborations
• Lessons learned improve future collaborations
RESULTS: STUDENTS

How much did you enjoy the collaborative project?
FINAL STUDENT OBSERVATIONS

Very engaging learning experience - expanded my knowledge of Panama.

I like the fact that I was introduced to new tools of communication.

I personally enjoyed being a part of the program. I hope the school continues with it. It's an experience all students should be a part of.

In international business you can’t always be face-to-face with the person you are communicating with. Technology has really helped to shorten the gap and make communication easier. I feel like in the classes we were constantly having problems with technology: a microphone wouldn’t work, the video wouldn’t stream, or the internet connection was not stable. But that is the way it is. While doing my internship at Philips I had to communicate with other countries everyday and I would have the same problems. I have learned that I need to be patient and deal with the occasional flaw in technology because it is key to communicating with other countries.
I found the level and substance of student engagement made this an invaluable project.

I think that if it was a bit more organized it could have done even better...that said, students enjoyed the experience!

*it was a good experience indeed even with overloading my time 😊 I enjoyed it as new experience. Thanks for the opportunity.*
FACULTY OPINION: DO IT AGAIN?

I would like to use virtual meeting tools with other courses.
FUTURE EXPLORATION

• Does the impact last?
• Does collaboration have a positive impact on post-collaboration course activity and final grades?
• More exploration with mobile devices
• Try to measure changes in cross cultural understanding
• Design collaborations with learning objectives specific to fomenting the international experience rather than JUST course related objectives
• More trials involving international faculty and institutions
• Test voice tools especially to see if help overcome time differences
• Test with larger sample and larger class sizes
• Test longer collaborations/full term courses
USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Zoom  http://zoom.us
Blue jeans  http://bluejeans.com
Blackboard Collaborate
Skype
Google Apps
Wordpress (blogs)
Facebook
What’s App
CONTACT INFORMATION

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THANK YOU!